a proposal for setting up a gas based brown field fertilizer plant at its Durgapur unit.

(d) The time frame will depend on the availability of gas and techno-economic viability of the proposal.

Ensuring affordability of essential drugs

3387. SHRI VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has directed after the year 2002 to ensure availability and affordability of essential drugs;

(b) if so, the details of steps taken for the above;

(c) the medicines from the list of essential drugs kept under the span of price control list of medicine;

(d) whether there is any proposal to develop different models to regulate prices of different category of drugs;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether there is any proposal to create a separate list of medicines for hospital supply that would not be subject to any price control; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) (a) to (g) The Government announced the 'Pharmaceutical Policy 2002' in February 2002. However, a public interest litigation filed in the High Court of Karnataka at Bangalore resulted in an Order dated 12-11-02, which stopped the Government from implementing the price control regime of the Pharmaceutical Policy 2002. This Department filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) before the Supreme Court of India against the Order of the Karnataka High Court, which has been admitted as SLP (C) No. 3668/ 2003. The Supreme Court *vide* its order dated 10.3.2003 directed the Government, *inter-alia,* that, "we suspend the operation of the order to the extent it directs that the Policy dated 15.2.2002 shall not be implemented. However we direct that the petitioner shall consider and formulate appropriate criteria for ensuring essential and life saving drugs not to fall

out of the price control and further directed to review drugs, which are essential and life saving in nature till 2nd May, 2003". Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has brought out the National List of Essential Medicines, 2003 after the review of the National Essential Drugs List, 1996. The matter is *sub-judice* before the Supreme Court.

The National Common Minimum Programme as adopted by the Government aims, *inter-alia,* to ensure availability of life saving drugs at reasonable prices. In the light of National common Minimum Programme and the observations of the Supreme Court in SLP (C) No. 3668/2003, the Government constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (PI) to suggest measures for fulfilling the objectives of National Common Minimum Programme to ensure the availability of life saving drugs at reasonable prices. This Committee has submitted its interim report to the Government.

Subsequently, a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Dr. Pronab Sen, Principal Adviser, Planning Commission was constituted to explore options other than price control to make available life saving drugs at reasonable prices. The Task Force has submitted its report to the Government on the 20th September, 2005.

However, the Government in consultation with various stakeholders is examining the recommendations of the Task Force. Based on that a new Pharmaceutical Policy is likely to be announced shortly.

Retail price of drugs

3388. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRI R.K.ANAND:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a wide gap between the retail and wholesale prices of medicines;

(b) if so, whether any step has been taken to reduce the price gap between the wholesale and retail levels;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, by when his Ministry is planning to take such steps?